

IMMUNIZATION AND INFECTIOUS DISEASES

The Issue

Immunization rates in Maryland are not yet at levels which approach the national Healthy People targets to be achieved by 2010. Administration of appropriate vaccines to children and adults can help to control a variety of preventable infectious diseases.

Low immunization rates and diseases that can be prevented by vaccines continue to be concerns in Maryland, especially among preschoolers and the elderly. Vaccines can prevent the debilitating, and sometimes fatal effects of many (such as polio, measles, and rubella), but not all, infectious diseases. Although significant progress has been made since 1996, immunization rates in Maryland are not yet at levels which approach the national 2010 target rates. The immunization coverage rates for the standard childhood series of immunizations (80% in Maryland) mirrors the national rate, for children 19 to 35 months. In addition to the very young, many adults are at increased risk for vaccine-preventable diseases (including influenza and pneumonia). Maryland's coverage rates need to increase in order for more vaccine-preventable diseases to be prevented.

